

Ohio political parties make progress in disclosure

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Major Findings

In 1995 the Ohio legislature passed campaign finance reform legislation limiting campaign contributions and requiring certain types of financial disclosure. Reform allowed larger contributions to flow to political parties than to candidates. Candidates were required to provide the full address of contributors and to disclose the employer of contributors giving more than \$100. Candidates must also provide the addresses of contributors. Political party committees were exempted from these basic disclosure requirements.

This study analyzes whether state level political party committees revealed the addresses of contributors, and the employers of individual contributors who gave more than \$100, even though Ohio law does not require it.

Disclosure of the address, city, and zip code for contributors is important because it allows voters, citizen activists and researchers to have the opportunity to identify the source of contributions to each political party.

Ohio law clearly requires employer identification of large contributions for statewide and legislative candidates. Employer identifications are valuable because they enable the public to learn about the economic interests behind financial contributions. With such information, voters have more indications about who supports a party and what positions parties may take on key decisions.

- In 1997 and 1998 all Democratic and Republican political party committees voluntarily disclosed 96 percent or more of the addresses of contributors. This is a wonderful advance over the 1995-1996 period, when the Ohio Republican Party committees disclosed 92 percent or more of the contributions they received and Ohio Democratic Party committee funds disclosed 17 percent or less of the addresses of contributors.
- In 1997 and 1998 the Republican Senate and House caucus committees voluntarily disclosed the employers for 91 percent or more of the dollar amount of contributions from individual contributors who gave more than \$100. The Ohio Democratic Party voluntarily disclosed 82 percent or more of the employers of contributors. The Center commends the Ohio House Republican Campaign Committee, the Ohio Democratic Party, the Ohio Democratic Party State Candidate Fund, and the Republican Senate Campaign Committee for this voluntary disclosure. It was above and beyond the disclosure required by Ohio law.
- The Ohio Republican Party committees did not voluntarily disclose the employers of their individual contributors who gave more than \$100. The House Democratic Caucus Fund disclosed 11 percent of the dollar amount that should have been disclosed and the Committee for a Democratic Majority disclosed 67 percent.

**1997-98 Disclosure Report:
Ohio Statewide Political Party Committees
Disclosure of Addresses**

| Committee | Total Contributions | Contributions with addresses | Percent with addresses | Grade |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Ohio Republican Party Campaign Committee | 628 | 622 | 99% | A |
| Ohio Republican Party Public Funds | 47 | 47 | 100% | A |
| Ohio Republican Party State Candidate Fund | 3559 | 3557 | 99.9% | A |
| Ray C. Bliss Building Trust Fund | 24 | 24 | 100% | A |
| Republican Senate Campaign Committee | 1907 | 1906 | 99.9% | A |
| Ohio House Republican Campaign Committee | 2873 | 2873 | 100% | A |
| Ohio Democratic Party | 775 | 766 | 98.8% | A |
| Ohio Democratic Party Building Fund | 123 | 122 | 99.2% | A |
| Ohio Democratic Party Political Party Fund | 61 | 59 | 96.7% | A |
| Ohio Democratic Party State Candidate Fund | 365 | 365 | 100% | A |
| House Democratic Caucus Fund | 2079 | 2077 | 99.9% | A |

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|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|-------|---|
| Committee for a Democratic Majority | 365 | 364 | 99.7% | A |
| Reform Party of Ohio | 77 | 13 | 16.9% | F |

**1997-98 Disclosure Report:
Ohio State Political Party Committees
Disclosure of Employers of Individual Contributors Who Gave More than \$100**

| Committee | Total individual contributions | Contributions with employer disclosed | Percent of amount with employer | Grade |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|--------------|
| Ohio Republican Party Campaign Committee | \$553,423 | \$0 | 0% | F |
| Ohio Republican Party Public Funds | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Ohio Republican Party State Candidate Fund | \$1,272,614 | \$0 | 0% | F |
| Ray C. Bliss Building Trust Fund | \$1,000 | \$0 | 0% | F |
| Republican Senate Campaign Committee | \$665,714 | \$639,926 | 96.1% | A |
| Ohio House Republican Campaign Committee | \$814,489 | \$748,604 | 91.9% | A |
| Ohio Democratic Party | \$743,035 | \$621,235 | 83.6% | B |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-------|----|
| Ohio Democratic Party Building Fund | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Ohio Democratic Party Political Party Fund | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Ohio Democratic Party State Candidate Fund | \$486,492 | \$401,696 | 82.6% | B |
| House Democratic Caucus Fund | \$71,095 | \$8,025 | 11.3% | F |
| Committee for a Democratic Majority | \$24,900 | \$16,600 | 66.7% | D |
| Reform Party of Ohio | \$500 | \$0 | 0% | F |

Recommendations

1. Political party committees in Ohio should be required to disclose the full name and address of contributors. This disclosure should include the name, street address, city, state and zip code of contributors.
2. Political party committees in Ohio should be required to disclose the employer of contributors who give more than \$100, so that voters will have important information about the economic source and interests of contributors.
3. This kind of information should be filed electronically by parties and candidates and quickly posted on the Internet by the Ohio Secretary of State. H.B. 119, sponsored by Rep. Ron Amstutz of Wooster would accomplish this.

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The Citizens Policy Center, a not-for-profit tax-exempt organization, is the research and public education affiliate of Ohio Citizen Action. The Center was founded in Cleveland in 1976 to conduct research and public education about issues affecting industrial states, recognizing that the industrial states were going through economic changes that would make obsolete much of the conventional wisdom about state and local public policy.

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